

Election or Predestination

By Prof. E. F. Strotter

This great theme has occupied the minds of great theologians for centuries. It is a theme about which our minds can never become dear without Divine Illumination. Innumerable and learned discourses have been written about it. And it is a serious question.

"Am I one of the elect?" "Can one ever know who is of that number?" "What does it mean to belong to that number?"

Paul writes to the Thessalonians, "Knowing, brethren, your election of God." How could he know? This is not a superficial idea which can be so easily solved. But God's children have a right to know, even though they cannot understand why. No one can answer the question as to why God called one out of all the thousands of Chaldees, and made him to be the father of all that believe. Neither can we say why God chose the method of election for the fulfillment of His great plan of redemption, to bring about the Reconciliation and Restoration of the entire Universe.

The Elect

But He states very clearly that He intends to do so through His "elect". We know who is the first and greatest of His Chosen Ones—"that in all things he should have the pre-eminence." We also know who His Chosen people are—and why. How He chose them out of all nations and prepared them to be the bearer of all His revelation and blessings to the other nations. Rom. 9:4,5. He also states very clearly that He is now choosing and "calling out a people for His name" Acts 15:14, from among the Gentiles for the Great Day of Redemption—His own Body—through which He will accomplish His great plans and purposes.

If that is His plan, then it is out of the question that in their age all the work of redemption should be completed, and that at the close of this age, all that are not of the "Elect" should be hopelessly lost.

Israel is the First Born among the Nation* The Church, his Body—the First Born of the Universe.

The Plan

1 First a people from among the Gentiles for His name.

2 After this, I will return—and build the Tabernacle of David, which is fallen down—and build again the ruin thereof.

3 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, says the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world (ages). When we once get a clear vision of this wonderful plan, our whole viewpoint and understanding of the plan of redemption and its scope will be changed. We will not expect the whole world to be converted in this dispensation. We will realize that there is no Christian nation, nor wear ourselves out-trying to reform society. God will take care of that later—when His time comes. We will also understand why unregenerate humanity, in spite of all missionary work is going steadily backward, ripening unto Judgment, God is not now concerned about the masses, but about the calling put and preparation of His Body members. That does not mean that all the others are excluded from salvation any more than the nations

were excluded from His plan when He called Israel to be His first born Son, In Christ's great prayer, John 17, He prays first for His own, not for the world (Verse 9), next, He prays for those who believe-through the apostle's word (Verse 20), then, that the world may-believe that the father has sent Him until all believers have become one and been glorified. When that has taken place the whole world, which until then has been chained in unbelief and in whom Satan has been permitted to do his masterpiece, will receive life and salvation. "For God has concluded them all in unbelief that He might have mercy on all." Oh, the depth of the riches, both of wisdom and knowledge, of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things; to Whom be glory forever." Amen.

The Understanding Son

The Son understood me Father, and was content with the apparent lack of success in the three year ministry among His people Israel, and said, "I have finished the work Thou hast given me to do." He knew that He still had the ages to fulfill the great work of redemption. Our generation can learn much from Him and not try to convert the world in one generation. We should let the Holy Spirit work through us in calling out the people for His name. So few have caught the vision that the "Ecclesia" of this Dispensation is a body of Chosen Ones — Called-out ones"

The Time of Rejection

At this present time, as long as this age lasts, the elect of God have nothing to expect but opposition, persecution, and rejection; as we have been rescued from this "present evil age." We are warned by Christ and the apostles that it will be so. Unpopular, despised, rejected as He was

How the Elect are Recognized

But how did Paul know that the "Thessalonians" were chosen-elect? On two well defined lines. On these lines rests the entire secret.

Paul says "For" our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and with much assurance.' This is absolutely the necessary condition for the real calling out or election. All depends on the Word, with its quickening, binding, and liberating power. It is the first thing we hear when Abraham was called, "And God spoke unto Abraham."

No one can call himself. That is altogether God's prerogative and responsibility. Although we read that it is the will of God "that all should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" we find nowhere that God wills to make all men chosen and elect anymore than an earthly king makes all loyal subjects members of his cabinet.

The confusion which prevails on this subject throughout all Christendom has its source in the fact that there is no distinction made between being saved and being elect. Lot was saved and righteous, says the Scripture, but he was not chosen, as Abraham. No man has ever been blessed through Lot. The election consists in the fact that one is for God only, and ready to be used by Him, for the execution of all his great plans with mankind. To be saved is one thing, to be used of God In the execution of some Divine ministry is another.

If that is not kept in mind there never will be a dear understanding of God's plan and program. Because this was not understood, the Church has believed that this present age or dispensation is "the only time," and the "last opportunity" given to mankind to be saved, whereas, this dispensation is definitely "to call out a people for His name." After this "I will return and build again the tabernacle of David, etc., that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called."

This Dispensation Not the Last

If it had been God's plan that this is the only age or time for mankind to be saved, it would have to be called a mighty failure, because it is plainly to be seen that after 2,000 years of Gospel preaching, hardly one-third of those living today have had even the first tidings of a Savior, not to speak of the innumerable generations, who in the dark past ages have gone down to their death.

If this age was the only one in God's plan for the salvation of man, and we know that there is only one way of salvation, of which the majority have never heard; then the responsibility would rest with God, who made such a plan and did not have the resources or facilities to carry it out.

God is not so unjust, or so unmerciful, or so helpless. "There is no other name whereby men can be saved." "How can they call on Him of whom they have never heard?" It stands to reason that if God makes such a plan, He has to give every man the opportunity.

The whole problem lies in the fact that the creeds of men have made unreasonable interpretations of the plain words of Scripture. Some are saved by grace and do not come into Judgment. Others must go through the Judgments and will not come out "until they have paid the uttermost farthing." But, let no one forget that the Scripture says, "Then cometh the end, when He (Christ) shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and when all things shall be subdued unto him...that God may be all in all." Not all in some.

How much twisting and wrestling of Scripture has been done, as Peter writes of the teaching of Paul, "Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you... speaking in them of these things: in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction."

When our eyes have been opened to this wonderful Gospel in its entirety, there comes such a harmony and clarity into the picture of God's thoughts that one is amazed with the grandeur of it all.

Then the question arises — How is it that I have heard this call to come into the unity and fellowship with the Son of God as a member of His body? Why is it that God lets the call go out for centuries in one land or another, while other lands lie in darkness and the shadow of death? To that question we must bow our heads under the obedience of Christ, but it is indescribably blessed and precious to know that all those who have not been privileged to hear the call in the present dispensation are not by any means to be reckoned among the eternally lost or castaways.

In Christendom, there is great opposition to this conception of Paul's Wonderful Gospel—"the Mystery, which was hid in the past ages," which opposition in most instances extends to persecution. But if God has opened our eyes to His wonderful plan, we cannot permit ourselves to be confused or hindered from setting our face like a flint that we lose nothing of the riches of His grace, which God has prepared for them that love Him, and that in our ministry of the Word, we are faithful under all circumstances to proclaim the whole counsel of God, not allowing any cutting away of the whole full counsel and will of God, so plainly given in His Word.

Earmarks of Election

So the earmark of the elect is "having received the Word in much affliction, with joy in the holy Ghost." "Ye received it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe."

"Ye received the Word." That is the climax of the secret of the election. The same proof we find in the words of Jesus, "I have given them thy words, which thou gave me; and they have received them and haven known surely, that I came out from them and have believed that thou hast sent me,"

In our attitude toward the "Word of God" and not our loyalty to any one group or denomination, will it become manifest if we are of the elect or not. We have only one desire and one purpose and that is under all circumstances, at any price: to come into "the Word" and in all obedience to it, whatever this attitude brings us from our fellow man. If that is our desire and purpose it shows that we are elect of God. God knows those who humbly and sincerely seek to know the whole counsel of his will in all knowledge and spiritual understanding, and we do not have to try and steady the ark. God will safely go through with all his glorious plans, and in the end, He will be Victor, and not Satan. "He, Jesus, will see the travail of His soul and be satisfied."

Another earmark of election is 'with joy in the Holy Ghost' and "in much assurance."

God alone, and His Word alone, must have the full sovereign right in our lives, And the Holy Spirit put his seal on God's Word with his renewing and redeeming, transforming power, He can get along without all oratory, anecdotes, and illustration, but the Word of God is indispensable to Him. To be for God and for Him alone, to do all things for His glory, to make His Word one's only guide and authority, added to the other earmarks, may give one proof and assurance of his election before God.

"For whom He did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first born among many brethren, Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called, and whom He called, them he also justified, and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Rom. 8:29-30.

"And He is the Savior of all men, especially (in the first place) of them that believe." Let us, at least, be like the Bereans, more noble, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Acts 17:11.

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